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The Month.

The 5d. Stamp of New South Wales.

It may not be generally known that the 1st. December, 1905, will see the jubilee of that grand old stamp, the 5d. diadem, New South Wales, this stamp having been issued on the 1st. December, 1855. The other stamp of the 1854-56 diadem series that has survived the many changes in design since those dates is the 3d., whose jubilee will be in October, 1906. We are not prepared at present with any suggestion how to celebrate the jubilee, except that as the leading philatelic institution in New South Wales, the Sydney Philatelic Club should take the form of celebration in its own hand. Were it not that the postal administration of this state is now a Federal concern, something might be suggested to the postal authorities. But in the interest of collectors we are against the issue of a special stamp for the occasion. It is very likely that the matter will be broached at the annual meeting in July of the Sydney Philatelic Club, and some definite steps taken to mark the jubilee.

Pen Marking of Postage Stamps.

We learn from the *London Philatelist* that the penmarking of postage stamps is to be made illegal in India, as it has long been in Great Britain, in order to enable the introduction of the much-needed unified stamp for postal and revenue purposes. The Indian *Gazette* notifies that the postage on a postal article shall not be deemed prepaid if the stamp is obliterated, defaced or damaged except by authority from the Government. The unified stamp will be used for both postal and receipt purposes. The above information has suggested a question which we intended to discuss some time ago: Are postage stamps used for parcel purposes of the same value in a collection as the same stamps used for the prepayment of letters and newspapers? We will meet any likely contention that stamps used for newspaper postage have as little right to be collectable as those used for parcels, by saying that letters and newspapers come under the same category, both being the conveyancers of news. But the contrary is the case with parcels. Whilst we fully agree with the objection to penmarked stamps, we at the same time are strongly of opinion that the leading philatelic bodies should have made strenuous efforts to have the stamps used for the transmission of parcels by post cancelled differently to those used for letter or newspaper postage. The regulations as they stand at present are mischievous. They have introduced a certain amount of fraud in the collecting of

stamps, since the higher values are now fairly well accessible to most collectors, and their place in the album, in the majority of instances, is one of "pretence" only. Before cheap postage came on the scene, it was seldom that one saw a higher value stamp on a letter than the 2s., except on a banker's letter. Even the £5 stamp introduced into Great Britain in 1882 is open to question as a legitimate postage stamp. Parcels or bank notes sent through the post should be treated the same way as other parcels, and the stamps on the cover should not have the same value as stamps used for the prepayment of ordinary letters. Unfortunately as matters now stand there is no remedy; besides the mischief has already been done. Where the satire of the postage-revenue and the rejection of pen-marked postage stamps questions comes in is, that the prices of penmarked stamps of some countries, Tasmania for instance, are quoted in the catalogue at from 300 to 600 per cent. lower than those with the proper cancelling mark, although the cancellation on penmarked specimens having a number only, were legitimately used for postal purposes, several of the smaller offices in Tasmania not having been provided with a proper cancelling instrument. Yet these penmarked stamps, some dating back half-a-century, are of less value than some stamps used to-day for the carriage of a parcel of groceries through the post.

The reading of a paper by Mr. Waddington, the exchange superintendent, at the June meeting of the Sydney Philatelic Club provoked a deal of interesting discussion. The subject chosen by the speaker was "Conditions in relation to catalogue values." One of the members touched the question of value of penmarked specimens. He instanced the issues of Tasmania prior to 1863, (the date fiscal regulations compelled the stamping of receipts and other documents). In many instances the stamps used for postal purposes were cancelled with a penmarked number only; the figures denoting the number of the post office which had no other method of cancelling stamps. Yet in the catalogues a stamp thus cancelled, which, with the proper postmark, is priced at from say, 15s. to 70s., is valued only at so many pence. This and other similar anomalies in Australian issues has never received the attention of the leading philatelic authorities. Penmarked Tasmanians prior to 1863 can thus be easily separated from stamps used for fiscal purposes. In Queensland, newspaper proprietors sending parcels of newspapers by post were allowed to cancel the stamps used to prepay postage by simply writing the name of the newspaper or the proprietors across the stamp, and no further cancellation was done by the postal authorities. Yet these stamps are in the penmarked condition of little value. The Victorian 4d. beaded oval is also known cancelled with a penmark, yet no fiscal duties were in force until 1880. The 2d. star of New Zealand, the early Fiji's, and some of the early New South Wales' are also known in a penmarked condition. Would it not be in the province of the Sydney Philatelic Club to offer a suggestion to the philatelic authorities in England with the view of having the true value of these stamps put on its proper basis?